

RICHTER PARK AUTHORITY MEETING MINUTES

Virtual meeting via Zoom

TUESDAY, March 16, 2021, 6:00 PM

In compliance with Connecticut General Statute § 1-225, these minutes are being provided for informational purposes and are subject to approval of the Richter Park Authority Board of Directors at its next regular meeting.

Chairman John Priola opened the meeting at 6:02 PM.

Members present: John Priola, George Radachowsky, Don LoRusso, Bob Eberhard, Leroy Diggs, Wendy Grispin, Pete Siecienski and Judy Griemsmann.

Also present: Karen Madaus, Business Manager, Jonathan Pinto, Head Professional and Rob Dorsch, Golf Course Superintendent.

Absent: Al Mead, Paul DiNardo and Felix Bonacci.

Public participation

none

Approve minutes of previous meetings

Mr. Diggs made a motion to approve the minutes from the February RPA meeting. Ms. Grispin seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Correspondence

There is correspondence from Russ Griemsmann which will be read later in the meeting.

Arts Association

The Arts Association would like to have a Spring virtual arts show.

Musicals at Richter

Jim Blansfield donated a dumpster last weekend which was used to clean-up after the storm damage.

Fairfield Giving Day was successful and MAR raised over \$20K.

There is a lighting issue and it must be removed. There is a recommendation to get some of the highway sign holders from the City and use it for lighting and as a catwalk to change gels during performances. Mr. Dorsch is looking into it.

A request was made for MAR to expand the covered area backstage to a 9' x 16' enclosed structure with a concrete floor to be used for a changing area during performances and also as a storage area. Ms. Griemsmann made a motion to accept Bobby Bria's request to build the structure that he had described. Mr. LoRusso seconded it. Mr. Siecienski asked about the need for a building permit, and they plan to work on that once the request is approved. **Motion passed unanimously.**

MPC-Richter House

There has not been a meeting since February, but the Committee hopes to meet in April.

FORe

The memorial brick walkway is progressing. Plans for the annual raffle and annual fundraising breakfast are being discussed.

Business Manager's Report

Newtown Savings Bank has renewed their scoreboard sponsorship for another three years. Since the golf course is opening on Sunday, it has been very busy with ID renewals and pass purchases.

Head Golf Professional

Mr. Pinto is going to reach out to 1 year sponsors, as well as scorecard sponsors.

Opening day will be Sunday, March 21st. Within 45 minutes of announcing opening day, the tee sheet was filled until 4:00pm. Pro Shop inventory has started to come in. Pre-season rates will be similar to the last year. This year, since two people are allowed to share a cart, there will be a \$7/person surcharge if a single cart is requested. It will be followed to make sure this new policy isn't being abused.

Grounds and Greens

Opening day will be Sunday, March 21st. The greens are cleared and the drainage project is done. Per the CSGA, there will still not be any drinking water out on the golf course, and in 2022, a golf course will need a certified food handlers license for this. One idea would be to purify the water fountain in the clubhouse and possibly add one at the driving range. Ball washers will need to be reassessed as well.

Grass is not growing right now, as that doesn't typically happen until the middle of May.

Mr. Dorsch met with Jim Blansfield and Russ Griemsmann about the memorial pavers. Phase one will be in front of the fountains to the crosswalk, and possibly have Belgium block around the fountains or remove them and place a nice clock there. The process starts with the placement of blank bricks, and as they are sold, they are switched out (ie. In groups of 12) to be personalized.

Ms. Grispin made a motion to approve placement of the ornamental bricks as mentioned by Mr. Dorsch, under his authority. Mr. Diggs seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Financial report

Mr. LoRusso created a separate report to help look at comparisons between last year and this year. Mr. Radachowsky made a motion to accept the report. Mr. Diggs seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Finance Committee Report

No report.

Chairman's Comments/Report

See Old Business, below.

Old business

Mr. Priola asked the GM Committee members to discuss their thoughts on the Business Manager position with the full RPA:

Mr. LoRusso discussed how it's hard to go backwards in a position, after building up a job and getting a salary to change over to hourly with a pay cut. Give the Business Manager more tasks (ie. Pro Shop cashier) and keep the full current salary. A 60/40 split with the City would make sense as well.

Mr. Radachowsky pointed out that the GM Committee couldn't agree on a recommendation to the RPA, and although he agreed that a 60/40 split with the City would be great, it won't work.

Mr. Priola gave his suggestion of winter hours (12/15 - 3/15) at three days per week at five hours per day, and then during golf season (3/15 – 12/15), the Business Manager would work 40 hours/week. He feels that the title of Business Manager should stay, as it appropriately describes the position. He additionally suggested that the position switch from salary to hourly at a lower rate. He then reached out to the full RPA for their thoughts, also asking "is this worth doing?" .

Mr. Diggs agreed with Mr. Priola that a 60/40 split with the City may not work, as it simply will have too many variables, including who would determine hours at each place.

Ms. Griemsmann asked how much the RPA is looking at saving with suggested changes.

Ms. Grispin stated that if switching to hourly is too complicated, change the Business Manager's hours in the winter and reduce the overall salary.

Mr. Eberhard mentioned prorating the salary for the reduced winter hours.

Mr. LoRusso stated that Mr. Diggs PowerPoint presentation had mentioned if the hourly rate was reduced from \$34/hour to \$32/hour, the total reduction would be approximately \$10k.

Mr. Diggs stated that with his prior proposal, there would be a \$9,100 savings.

Mr. Siecienski stated that the job description could be re-written to a Monday – Friday position during season and a Monday/Wednesday/Friday position in the winter months. He stated that switching to hourly may not be great considering the overtime possibilities including the Danbury Amateur weekend. He believes that a 60/40 split CAN work with the City, as long as the allegiance is to Richter Park.

Mr. Diggs made a motion to adjust the Business Manager's winter hours to six hours per day, for three days per week, from December 15th through March 15th with no change to the salary structure, but adjusted for the reduced hours by \$9,100. Ms. Griensmann seconded the motion, but with the adjustment of the days and hours in winter after a discussion with the current Business Manager.

Ms. Madaus then spoke to the RPA about disagreeing with the suggested winter hours, as she has been in this position for 11 years and knows that it will take more than 18 hours/week for three months to do the job well. As an example, she mentioned that customer service issues arise whereas a more immediate response is required and having to wait to respond to some of these issues would not be providing good customer service. Additionally, after repeatedly taking on more and more responsibilities over the years and growing the position to where it is today, she stated that it is insulting to now cut her hours and salary just to save some money. She suggested that new revenue streams should be looked at, and cuts and reductions can be found elsewhere in the budget.

Ms. Griensmann withdrew her amendment and her seconding of Mr. Diggs motion. Ms. Grispin then seconded Mr. Diggs motion. A vote was taken and there were two ayes and five nays. **Motion did not pass.**

Mr. Priola then discussed the cell tower update. He spoke to Dan Rosemark and they are looking at getting out of the current contract, as no forward movement is happening. They talked about possibly resurrecting conversations with the police and/or fire department.

New business

none

Ms. Grispin made a motion to adjourn at 8:04pm. Mr. Diggs seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**